(c) The appointment of the selected candidates is held up for want of approval for the release of vacancies.

Purchase of shoes for armed forces

424. PROF. SAURIN BHATTACHARYA : Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to refer to the reply to Starred Question 144 given in the Rajya Sabha on the 4th March, 1993 and state :

(a) whether Government have investigated the causes of not following earlier decision of Central Government for procurement and purchase of boots and shoes for armed forces from the TAFCO;

(b) whether the capacity of 60 to 70 per cent in the TAFCO for boots for armed forces is not being fully utilised for the past several years;

(c) if so, whether Government would now direct the forces to utilise the capacity of the company to the maximum; and

(d) if not, the reasons therefor ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE (SHRI MALLIKARJUN) : (a) to (d) As per the decision of the Government, after booking the capacity of the Ordnance Equipment Factory, orders are placed on Public Sector Undertakings (P. S. Us) including TAFCO, for the balance quantities, on the basis of guidelines issued by the Department of Public Enterprises regarding purchases from P. S. Us. Only if such PSUs are unable to accept the order for any reason, the procurement is made from other sources.

Delay in production of the aircraft

425. SHRI KRISHNA KUMAR BIRLA : Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that LCA originally scheduled to take off in 1990 is not likely to be test flown before 1966;

(b) if so, what are the reasons for delay in the production of the aircraft;

(c) whether it is also a fact that over five to seven years would be required after its production before making the aircraft available to the IAF to overcome the teething trouble; and

(d) if so, what is its overall impact on the IAF ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE (SHRI MALLIKARJUN) : (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The reasons for delay are :

(i) not having undertaken a front-line indigenous aircraft development programme for more than 25 years, country lacked in infrastructure, technology and facilities. Development of a large number of technologies and facilities had to be taken up de-novo. Now the design capability has been built up.

(ii) non-availability of RB 199 engine, which was originally planned to be used in initial prototypes. Time taken in locating alternate engine and in getting clearance for GE 404 engine. We have also taken up our own aircraft engine (Kaveri) development.

(iii) non availability of critical foreign exchange. Conscious decision to change development strategy to enhance indigenous content, and accepting longer time-frame involved in indigenous routes.

(c) and (d) No, Sir. Once production starts there will be no delay in making available the aircraft to IAF. All the production problems will be overcome between the first flight of LCA in 1996 to Initial Operational Clearance (IOC) in the year 2002. These time schedules have been jointly evolved between ADA

and Air Force. In the interim period, Air Force is working on a proposal for update of MIG aircrafts.

Petroleum facility at Bhusawal

426. SHRI SATISH PRADHAN : Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that Defence has huge petroleum storage facility at Bhusawal in Maharashtra known as IRPD;

(b) whether it is also a fact that this facility has become redundant; and

(c) if so, whether the Defence will handover this facility to oil company or STC or Government of Maharashtra for effective use ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE (SHRI MALLIKARJUN) : (a) to (c) To meet the operational requirement of Army for Petroleum products, storage depot at Bhusawal in Maharashtra exists which is being utilised for the said purpose. There is no proposal to handover this Depot to any other Agency.

Defence co-operation with Kuwait

427. DR. SANJAYA SINH : Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that Kuwait is keen on expanding Defence Cooperation with India;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) what is the response of Government in the matter ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE (SHRI MALLIKARJUN) : (a) to (c) Enquiries have been received from Kuwait for supply of Defence stores. Certain interest in Indian Training Courses has also been evinced. The matter is at an exploratory stage. India is positively inclined to proposals of mutually beneficial Defence Cooperation with all friendly countries, including Kuwait.

Supply of spares from SLOVAK Republic

428. SHRI RAMDAS AGARWAL : Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that the SLOVAK Republic is willing to supply spare parts for defence equipments to India as reported in the Hindustan Times dated 16th April, 1993;

(b) if so, what are the details thereof; and

(c) whether it is a fact that India is desperately in the need of spares for the Russian-supplied defence equipment and whether any meeting between the leaders/delegations of two countries held in this regard; is so, the outcome thereof ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE (SHRI MALLIKARJUN) : (a) to (c) A number of offers regarding defence supplies, including supply of spares, are received, from time to time from Russia/C.I.S./East European countries, including the SLOVAK Republic. These are then assessed in the light of the requirements of the defence forces which are periodically reviewed. Issues regarding defence supplies are taken up from time to time by Indian/Russian/C.I.S./East European delegations and mutually resolved. Details of the outcome of these meetings or the details of the offers received cannot be divulged in the interest of national security.

France bagging the jet fighter contract

429. SHRI KRISHNA KUMAR BIRLA : Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that U.S. and Soviet Governments had made a bid for a billion dollar contract for jet fighters;